



MEDIA BRIEFING NOTE

Between Land and Sea, two coastal communities in the Ocean Division under pressure

The Nlende Dibè and Eboundja I villages are both found in the Ocean Division, South Region, Cameroon. Their inhabitants mainly rely on fishing and agriculture for food security and income. Unfortunately, these coastal communities face increasing pressure on the land and its resources, and are exposed to risks affecting their access to both fisheries and land resources.

01

RISKS RELATING TO OIL AND PORT FACILITIES

The presence of oil rigs and the Kribi deep-sea port contribute to narrowing the fishing grounds, thus compelling fishermen to go further out to sea. This would require outboard motors which are expensive and not affordable for everyone. And, for fishermen who already have them, the costs are higher, as a result of the extra fuel needed to operate farther offshore. The need to go farther is heightened by pollution and boat movements that

scare away fish. The Environmental and Social Management Report of the Kribi Port Complex in 2010 had already indicated pollution as a risk. Actually, accidental (or not) spillages from ships and port activities, either due to collisions/accidents between ships, accidental leakage of dangerous products, such as hydrocarbons, chemicals, etc., would be discharged into the sea and this would contribute to reducing fish stocks and biodiversity.

In addition, the communities concerned believe that the deep-sea port causes changes in tides following the installation of the dykes and has contributed, in the initial phase of its installation, to the destruction of the mangrove swamps where fish reproduce, thereby curtailing the availability of fisheries resources.

The small-scale fishermen interviewed believe that they are suffering from the impacts of these installations and that these should be mitigated by compensating them so that they can adapt to these changes in their environment. Unfortunately, the Petroleum Code of 25 April 2019 makes no provision for this. Also, the fishermen noted that during the consultations for the Impact Study on the implementation of the port, they had expressed some grievances. However, those in charge of the port did not fully take them into account. In addition, they deplored the fact that the jobs in these platforms are more beneficial to non-local people.

Considering the impacts of the port, the Resettlement Action Plan (RAP) of the Deep-Sea Port Steering Committee in 2010 had proposed a specific programme to support small-scale fisheries. The latter included a technical and organisational support section, as well as a financial section with a partial subsidy and credit and micro-finance for the purchase of engines and cold-storage rooms. In addition, the project was designed to urge the authorities to comply with maritime laws regarding offshore fishing (MINEPAT, 2010). Unfortunately, the measures taken, such as the distribution of school supplies, are not sufficient and effective.

02

THREATS FROM CLIMATE CHANGE ON FISHING ACTIVITIES

It is important to note that all the fishermen interviewed recognised that climate change also affects fishing activities. These changes are evident, for example, by inducing shorter or longer seasons. According to the fishermen, the availability of different types of fish varies with the changing seasons. As they explained, these changes in seasons have an impact on the purchase and profitability of fishing equipment, as fishermen purchase fishing equipment on a seasonal basis. For example, if a fisherman takes a loan for the purchase of equipment (a specific fishing net for a given season) and that season is overturned, he will not be able to use this net to generate a return on his investment and he will be unable to repay the loan.

03

POOR CONSULTATION OF FISHERMEN IN DECISION-MAKING

All the fishermen interviewed believed there is no clear discussion forum in which they are consulted on decisions that affect their sector of activity. Meetings with the authorities are confined to raising awareness on the payment of taxes and fees and on the prohibition of access to oil rigs.

However, [the FAO's Voluntary Guidelines \(VGs\)](#) of 2015 to ensure the sustainability of small-scale fisheries for food security and poverty eradication urge states to ensure active, free, effective, meaningful and informed participation of small-scale fishing communities, including indigenous peoples, in the entire decision-making process concerning fisheries resources and areas where small-scale fishing is practised, as well as surrounding areas, while taking into account power imbalances between the different parties involved. These guidelines call for the equitable participation of women, by designing special measures to achieve this objective.

At the local level (in the villages and sub-divisions of the Ocean division), it should be noted that the fishermen have a coordination problem, as there are very few fishermen associations that are established and functional.

This deficiency makes it difficult for small-scale fishermen and workers in the fisheries sector to make their voices heard, as well as advocate for their basic rights and their right to access the resources that sustain their livelihoods.

04

THREATS ON ACCESS TO LAND RESOURCES

Land rights in coastal or seafront areas are vital for guaranteeing and facilitating access to fisheries, ancillary activities (including processing as well as marketing of fisheries products) and for housing and other livelihood conditions such as agriculture (FAO, 2015).

The Nlende Dibè and Eboundja I communities face difficulties in accessing land resources, as their villages are in the zone marked by a 'Public Utility Declaration' (DUP) for the Kribi deep-sea port and whose villages will be part of the new town that will be built around the port. It should be noted that the Government has declared a DUP of 26,000 ha from the south of Lolabé 3 to the Lobé Falls (CPSCPEPK, 2010). Despite its many constituents, the surface area of such a project, with the exception of access roads, should not cover so much land. This takeover could therefore be an open door for speculation and land use to the detriment of the local population.

The above-mentioned communities revealed that they did not receive compensation because a greater portion of the lands lacked land titles. Indeed, in Cameroon's context, very few people have land titles in rural areas as the formal and informal land tenure systems

overlap. Local community members tend to rely on customary tenure and community schemes for accessing lands and managing land disputes. Lands are considered an ancestral heirloom and are a community asset under the care of a community leader or his or her representative. Thus, the land “belongs” to the community members and their members living outside the community. They have the right to use and benefit from it. As such, they consider themselves customary owners (Wily, 2011). It should be noted that the Voluntary Guidelines for Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests in the Context of National Food Security (VGGT), adopted by FAO in 2012, widely recognise both legal and customary, as well as formal and informal land rights as legitimate. Further, they encourage states to acknowledge, document, and respect all legitimate land rights in national laws, policies, and practice (FAO, 2016).

Given that Cameroon does not recognise this legitimacy, the coastal communities involved in this case, together with other communities that have undergone expropriation procedures, are not compensated for the loss of land, but only for developments on land. Further, the Nlende Dibè and Eboundja I communities are not eligible for any relocation, as their villages will host the new town. These coastal communities stated they neither have the means to carry out their agricultural activities adequately, nor can they sell their land. They also complained that their crops are often destroyed as the companies in charge of the port works remove laterite, and they are not compensated. When they complain to the authorities, the latter do nothing to help them, as these communities have been notified in advance that no compensation will be paid in case of damage.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To address the above, the major recommendations are as follows:

- Support the affected fishermen with fishing equipment (canoes, outboard motors, etc.) to enable them to access the new fishing areas;
- Setting up Fish Aggregating Devices (FADs)¹ to compensate for fishing casualties in the areas affected by the port and oil platforms;
- Compensate the communities in the villages hosting the new town with land for their farming;
- Apply some local content principles regarding employment for villages which are affected by off-shore and on-shore oil exploration and exploitation;
- Institute a redistribution of oil royalties to the coastal communities as compensation for the damages incurred; and
- Ensure compliance with the Environmental and Social Management Plan (ESMP) of the deep-sea port.

A more comprehensive recommendation includes overhauling the normative framework in the fishing sector, while ensuring consistency with other sectors. This framework should, inter alia :

- Promote the participation of small-scale fishing communities in relevant fishing policy and decision-making processes, while ensuring the effective and equitable participation of women; and

¹ This measure includes adding nutrients to some (carefully selected) areas. These areas will serve as new feeding grounds for fish and other marine fauna.

- Ensure that small-scale fishermen and their communities have fair and appropriate security of tenure over fishing resources (marine and inland) and over small-scale fishing areas and surrounding land, with a special focus on women’s tenure rights.

Further recommendations for other sectors include:

- Develop and use a land-use planning approach that fully reflects the interests of small-scale fishing and its role in integrated coastal zone management; and
- Ensure coherency between different policies (economic development, food and nutrition security, environmental protection and adaptation to climate change, fishing) for a comprehensive and integrated development of coastal and other rural communities.

REFERENCES

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- FAO (2016), Responsible Governance of Tenure and the Law, A Guide for Lawyers and Other Legal Service Providers, Governance of Tenure Technical Guide No. 5.
- MINEPAT (2010), Resettlement Action Plan (RAP), Construction of the Kribi deep-sea port, final report.
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SUGGESTED TOPICS FOR REPORTS

- Social and economic adaptation of coastal communities displaced by the port to their new environment.
- Impact of climate change on rural communities’ access to natural resources.
- Local content in the oil sector.

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About the project

LandCam: Securing land and resource rights and improving governance in the Cameroon

The LandCam project aims to develop innovative approaches to facilitate inclusive dialogue at the national level, based on lessons learned from past experiences, to improve land governance.

LandCam promotes learning, throughout the ongoing reform of Cameroon's land legislation and will contribute to building the capacity of actors at the local, regional and national levels. LandCam works with key stakeholders across Cameroon to improve customary and formal rights to land and natural resources by piloting innovations in land governance at the local level and contributing to sustainable policy reforms.

New spaces will be created for more informed, effective and inclusive dialogue and analysis, with the participation of stakeholders. LandCam will monitor changes on the ground, monitor legal reforms and share lessons learned nationally and internationally.

Who are we?

IIED, CED and RELUFA are the organisations implementing the LandCam project, working closely with a wide range of partners in Cameroon and internationally.



International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED)

IIED promotes sustainable development by linking local priorities to global challenges. IIED supports some of the world's most vulnerable populations to make their voices heard in decision-making.



Centre for Environment and Development (CED)

CED is an independent organisation working to promote environmental justice and protect the rights, interests, culture and aspirations of local and indigenous communities in Central Africa. As an active member of several networks, the CED has succeeded over the years to mobilise allies to influence positively legal frameworks, monitor natural resource exploitation activities, sustainably build the capacities of dozens of local communities, and produce important scientific and advocacy documentation.



Réseau de Lutte contre la Faim (RELUF)

RELUF (Anti-hunger Network) is a platform of civil society and grassroots community actors created in 2001, which aims to address systemic problems that lead to poverty, hunger and social, economic and environmental injustices in Cameroon. The RELUF's work is based on three programs: Equity in Extractive Industries; Land and Resource Justice; and Food and Commercial Justice.

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